

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUJUMBURA 0038

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LIMDIS

FOR UNDER SECRETARY SISCO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SCUL, BY, US

SUBJECT: DOES STATE OR USIA DETERMINE POLICY ON THE AMERICAN
IMAGE IN BURUNDI

1. IN RETREATING LAST YEAR TO THE MASSIVE OBSCURITY OF BURUNDI, I NEVER FOR A MOMENT THOUGHT THAT ANY QUESTION WOULD ARISE HERE WHICH WOULD INCITE ME TO INTRUDE ON YOUR PREOCCUPATION WITH ISSUES THAT I KNOW SO WELL ARE YOUR DAILY CONCERN BECAUSE OF THEIR CLOSE RELATION TO NATIONAL SECURITY. I CAN MAKE NO CLAIM THAT THE PROBLEM ON WHICH I SEEK YOUR HELP IS IN ANY SENSE VITAL TO THE UNITED STATES; NOTHING IN BURUNDI IS. YET A MATTER HAS ARISEN WHICH FORCES ME TO ASK WHETHER OUR INVALUABLE SISTER AGENCY USIA, OWING TO ITS CURRENT BUDGETARY DIFFICULTIES, IS TO BE ALLOWED TO RIDE ROUGHSHOD OVER THE CONSIDERED POLITICAL JUDGMENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT, AND TO CLOSE DOWN THE AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER IN BUJUMBURA. DON EASUM AND HIS COLLEAGUES IN AF HAVE WAGED THE GOOD BATTLE TO NO AVAIL IN DIRECTOR KEOGH'S INNER SANCTUM, AND I TURN TO YOU AS A POSSIBLE LAST RESORT TO REDRESS THE BUREAUCRATIC BALANCE.

2. AF WILL, OF COURSE, IF YOU WISH TO PURSUE THIS, GIVE YOU ALL OF THE UNHAPPY DETAILS, BUT I WILL OUTLINE THE ESSENTIALS. OUR COUNTRY HAS NEVER BEEN PARTICULARLY ACTIVE IN THIS IMPOVERISHED
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NATION OF FOUR MILLION. WE HAVE RESPECTED ITS INGLORIOUS

ISOLATION IN THE MIDDLE OF AFRICA AND HAVE BEEN ALMOST PLEASED WITH OUR DETACHMENT WHEN, AS IN 1972 AND 1973, INTERNAL STRESSES BLEW UP IN THE FORM OF WIDESPREAD INTER-ETHNIC KILLINGS PERPETRATED BY THE RULING MINORITY.

3. HOWEVER, WITHIN THE LAST YEAR, THE INTERNAL SITUATION HAS STABILIZED, AND, IN RECOGNITION OF THIS, THE PRESIDENT HAS AUTHORIZED THE FULL NORMALIZATION OF BILATERAL RELATIONS. MOREOVER, WITH THE DISCOVERY UNDER UN AUSPICES OF AN ENORMOUS TREASURE OF NICKEL AND ANCILLARY MINERALS IN BURUNDI, AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN ARE SHOWING A TANGIBLE AND MOUNTING INTEREST IN HEAVY INVESTMENTS, PERHAPS UP TO SEVERAL HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS, IN THIS COUNTRY OVER THE NEXT FIVE TO TEN YEARS. IN RECOGNITION OF THIS CHANGE, WE ARE TRYING TO APPEAR MORE CONCERNED BY ESTABLISHING MODEST PEACE CORPS AND AID PROGRAMS HERE AND BY ENCOURAGING AMONG THE RULING ELITE A MORE ACCURATE APPRECIATION OF THE UNITED STATES AND OF THE ADVANTAGES OF CLOSER MUTUAL RELATIONSHIPS.

4. AT THIS JUNCTURE, WE HAVE BEEN INFORMED BY USIA THAT TO HELP SALVAGE ITS UNDOUBTEDLY SEVERE FINANCIAL POSITION, IT HAS DECIDED TO CLOSE DOWN OUR VERY MODEST CULTURAL CENTER LEAVING ONLY A FILM AND PUBLICATIONS DISTRIBUTION SERVICE. IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE THAT WE ARE APPROACHING A SUBSTANTIAL MINERAL RESOURCES STAKE IN BURUNDI OR THAT THE CENTER, MOST ESPECIALLY INCLUDING THE LIBRARY AND FILM SHOWING ROOM, HAS A CRUCIAL ROLE TO PLAY NOT ONLY IN OUR IMAGE BUILDING WORK BUT ALSO IN SUPPORTING BOTH OUR EXTENSIVE PRESENT ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROGRAM AND THE PROSPECTIVE PEACE CORPS EFFORT. IT IS IMMATERIAL TO USIA THAT THE USSR (AMONG OTHER NATIONS) MAINTAIN ITS CENTER HERE AND THAT THE CHINESE, WHO HAVE BEEN UNSUCCESSFULLY SEEKING A SUITABLE BUILDING IN TOWN, MIGHT WELL SNAP UP FOR THEIR OWN PROPAGANDA OUTLET OUR WELL RENOVATED USIS BUILDING (WITH A RENT OF UNDER \$6,000 PER YEAR). ALL THAT COUNTS FOR USIA IS THAT THE CLOSURE SCHEME WHICH THEY PROPOSE WILL SAVE THEM FROM \$20,000 (WE SAY) TO PERHAPS \$55,000 (THEY SAY) ANNUALLY.

5. ALTHOUGH WE LACK INFORMATION, IT IS OUR STRONG IMPRESSION THAT SIMILAR USIA TREATMENT IS NOT BEING METED OUT TO OTHER COUNTRIES

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IN AFRICA OF EVEN SMALLER SIZE (E.G., TOGO AND DAHOMEY) AND SMALLER POTENTIAL US INVESTMENT. AF HAS NOT BEEN CALLED IN BY USIA FOR ADVICE ON HOW ITS UNAVOIDABLE BUDGET CUTS MIGHT LEAST PAINFULLY BE SPREAD OVER THE AFRICAN HIDE FROM A POLICY VIEWPOINT. RATHER, USIA HAS MADE DECISIONS ON ITS OWN RATIONALES AND THEN, AT LEAST IN THE CASE OF BURUNDI, DISREGARDED STATE'S PLEAS TO ACCEPT POLITICAL GUIDANCE. FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW IT

IS INCONGRUOUS THAT, IN A PERIOD OF ASCENDING US RELATIONS WITH
BURUNDI, WE SHOULD CREATE THE OPPOSITE IMPRESSION OF GROWING
DISINTEREST. THROUGH ALL OF THE
MASSACRES OF SEVERAL YEARS AGO, WE KEPT OUR FLAG FLYING AT OUR
CULTURAL CENTER; NOW, AS BETTER TIMES LOOM, USIA WANTS TO HAUL IT
DOWN. I HOPE THAT YOU WILL FEEL IT SENSIBLE AND WORTHWHILE TO
TRY TO REVERSE THE TIDE.
MARK

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